



“The Guarantee of a Successful Atonement”

John 12:20-33

Theme: Jesus assures us that His work on the cross will successfully bring redemption to sinful men.

Introduction: What makes a guarantee worth trusting? We have all heard promises that sounded reassuring until it was time to fulfill them. A guarantee is only as dependable as the one who makes it—and as the one's ability to deliver on what was promised.

For instance, what gives a piece of paper money its value? A banknote may be beautifully printed, but the paper itself is worth very little. Its purchasing power depends on what backs it.

Under the gold standard, a nation's currency was tied to a fixed quantity of gold. When notes were redeemable in gold, holders could exchange a paper promise for something of recognized value. Confidence in that promise depended on the issuer's ability and willingness to honor it. The words printed on the note needed to be backed by substance.

Paper money has value today because of **public confidence, widespread acceptance, and the institutions that support it**. Modern currencies, such as the dollar, are *fiat money*: they are not redeemable for a fixed amount of gold. People accept them because they expect others to accept them in exchange for goods and services. Confidence in the issuing government and the central bank helps sustain that trust.

That raises a question far more significant than our money: What underlies the promise of our salvation? When we face the guilt of our sin and the certainty of death, what gives us confidence that we can be reconciled to God?

Our assurance rests on the character of God and on the redeeming work of His Son. Jesus would pay the price of our redemption with His own life, and His resurrection would demonstrate His victory over sin and death.

In John 12, Jesus approaches the cross and speaks with certainty about what His death will accomplish. The grain of wheat will fall into the earth and die—and it will bear much fruit. Here is a promise grounded in the Father's faithfulness and the Son's sufficient sacrifice: His work on the cross will bring redemption to sinful people.

That question takes on eternal significance when we consider our salvation. How can sinful people be reconciled to a holy God? How can our guilt be removed, the power of sin broken, and eternal life become our certain hope? Our confidence must rest on someone who can accomplish our redemption.

In John 12, Jesus stands just days from the cross. Opposition is mounting, His suffering is approaching, and some Greeks arrive with a simple request: “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Jesus responds that His hour has come. He then speaks of a grain of wheat that must fall into the earth and die before it bears much fruit.

Jesus knows what His death will accomplish. Even as His soul is troubled by what lies ahead, He speaks with certainty of the harvest to come. The Father will be glorified. Satan's power will

be broken. Sinners will be drawn to the Savior.

This passage assures us that Jesus' work on the cross will bring redemption to sinful people. Our hope rests in the Savior who willingly went to the cross, knowing that His sacrifice would accomplish the Father's purpose. We will see: 1. The Priority of Reconciliation, 2. The Principle of Regeneration, 3. The Provision of Relief, and 4. The Power of the Resurrection. All of this shows that **Jesus assures us His work on the cross will bring redemption to sinful men.**

Let us begin by considering the priority of reconciliation, seen in the arrival of these Greeks who wished to see Jesus.

I. The Priority of Reconciliation – *12:20-23*

A. The Sensitizing of the Sinner – *vv. 20-21*

1. At the time when the Jewish people were most responsible to open their hearts to the Messiah, they were asserting their own priorities, attempting to make Him into something other than what He truly was.
2. This response by them grieved Him – the people He came to accepted Him only on their own conditions.
3. In contrast to the Jewish people, *“there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip ... and began to ask him, saying, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus’.”*
4. These were likely Gentile proselytes to Judaism – having come to realize that the Greek sophistry provided no relief to the dark and lost condition of the soul.
5. In that we are told that left to themselves, “there is none who seeks for God” (*Romans 3:11*), these men had obviously been drawn to Christ by the Spirit of God.
 - a) *We don't know exactly how this happened; perhaps they witnessed Jesus's entry into Jerusalem several days earlier.*
 - b) *In that faith comes by hearing the Word of God (*Romans 10:17*), at some point they had heard someone proclaim the good news about Jesus – possibly the testimony of one of the eyewitnesses to the raising of Lazarus – cp. *v. 17*.*
6. This foreshadows God's work, in which the Gentiles would become the primary focus of God's redemption as God builds His church.
 - a) *Acts 15:7 – “the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.”*
 - b) *Ephesians 2:13-15 – God “broke down the barrier of the dividing wall” between Jew and Gentile.*
 - c) *Acts 9:15-16; Acts 13:46-49 – Paul was chosen to be a “light for the Gentiles.”*
7. Scripture tells us that this alternate focus of God, on the Gentiles, will be

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temporary until a future time when the fullness of the Gentiles has come - *Romans 11:25-29.*

8. We are not sure why the “Greeks” chose Philip:
 - a) However, we are told he was *“from Bethsaida of Galilee,”* a region inhabited by many Gentiles.
 - b) It may also be because *“Philip”* was a Greek name.
9. A question you could ask yourself at this point is, “Would someone unfamiliar with our church – or even our faith – feel comfortable enough with your interactions to ask for help?”
10. Here we see sinners who know they are in need, are sensitized to their condition, and seek relief by coming to Christ Jesus, demonstrating the universal demand, by Jew & Gentile alike, for the grace of God found in Christ Jesus.
11. Our desire is that the warmth we show others, the passion we display for Christ, and the integrity and authenticity of our lives would encourage people who lack faith in Christ to come to us with questions and for guidance in finding Christ.

B. The Sensitivity of the Savior – vv. 22-23

1. Before this, Jesus had clearly limited His ministry to the Jewish people – cf. *Matthew 15:23.*
2. The *“Greeks”* [*Ἕλλην*] - were unsure how the Lord would respond to their overture – would He reject them or accept them?
3. Again, we see that they go through one of the disciples, whom they believe would be the most “friendly” – *“Philip.”*
4. It appears that Philip isn’t sure about it either – *“Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus.”*
5. A believer who feels unable to answer a difficult question can seek help from another Christian. One person may build trust, another may explain the gospel, and another may provide ongoing care. Asking for help can serve the seeker well.
6. They approach the Lord with a certain timidity, having been wrong before about Jesus’ desire to attend to a particular group of people, cp. the issue of children – *Mark 10:13-14.*
7. Jesus's response is interesting – it triggers in Him an overwhelming awareness of the scope and impact of the sufferings He is about to endure – *“And Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man*

to be glorified.”

- a) *This is a major pivot, a moment when the pathway to the cross reaches a “runaway effect” – the threshold beyond which redemption cannot be stopped or reversed.*
 - b) *This is the first time “the hour” is said to be present – previously “it had not yet come.”*
- 8. In light of Jesus’s celebrated entry into Jerusalem, the disciples, among others, were likely elated to hear Jesus’s words, recognizing that the reference to *“the Son of Man”* recalls Daniel’s prophecy of the Messiah’s glory in establishing the Kingdom – cp. *Daniel 7:13-14*.
 - 9. The arrival of these Greeks signals that His redemptive love extends to the whole world, not just the Jewish people who were actively rejecting Him – cp. *John 1:12*.
 - 10. The need for men to be reconciled to God through Christ’s work is a universal problem that transcends races, cultures, classes, genders, and heritages.
 - 11. The Gentiles have always been on the heart of God – throughout the Old Testament:
 - a) *In the Law: through the Abrahamic Covenant – *Genesis 12:3*.*
 - b) *In the Prophets: In the Messianic Prophecies – *Isaiah 11:10*.*
 - c) *In the Writings: in the salvation of the world - *Psalms 98:2-3*.*
 - 12. Jesus sets His eye on the prize, the redemption of a lost world whom He would reconcile to the Father, the means of His glorification, cp. *Philippians 2:8-11; Hebrews 12:2*.

II. The Principle of Regeneration – *12:24-26*

A. The Indication of the Savior’s Devotion – *v. 24*

- 1. In these verses, Jesus shatters the disciples’ preconceptions that He would oust Rome and immediately fulfill the Davidic Covenant.
- 2. Jesus would certainly be glorified, but through death and resurrection, the cross was why Jesus came: to provide peace with God through the atonement.
- 3. Jesus is emphasizing that His death will bring forth a people whose new spiritual lives are marked by allegiance to Him.
- 4. The prize toward which Jesus looked causes Him to look at the immediate hour – the hour of accomplishment.
- 5. He thus embarks on a synopsis of how this glory is to be gained – through incomparable suffering – *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat*

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falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

6. First, the “fruit” [καρπός] refers to the “outcome” or product of something and here it is the glory to be received at the hour of victory
7. This fruit of glory is twofold:
 - a) First, it is a restoration to the previous status as the 2nd Person of the Triune God – cp. [John 17:5](#).
 - b) Second, it is the accolades gained by bringing many into glory with Him – cp. [Revelation 5:9-10](#); [Ephesians 4:8](#); [2 Corinthians 2:14](#).
8. Also, notice that the avenue He must travel is likened to a planted seed's germination, demanding death and ultimately life.
9. This clearly pictures the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, who becomes the “first fruits” of those who would thereafter believe in Him.
10. Once again, Jesus demonstrates the depth of His devotion not only to the Father by perfectly obeying Him, but also to sinners by willingly laying down His life.
11. In essence, Jesus promises success through His death: His atonement will bear fruit.

B. The Indication of the Sinner's Deliverance – vv. 25-26

1. What exactly is this fruit?
2. Jesus immediately refers to those who would benefit from the atonement – they would be powerfully changed out of a life of sin and death into a life of changed priority – *“He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.”*
3. This is not a condition to be met before salvation is granted; it is evidence of one who is truly born again by the Spirit of God; his life changes.
4. This statement needs closer examination:
 - a) *“He who loves his life ...”* – describes the person who clings to sinful pleasures, indulging in the course of this world and the desires of the flesh and the mind – cp. [Ephesians 2:1-3](#).
 - b) *“... loses it, ...”* – describes the consequence of being one who practices lawlessness – cp. [Matthew 7:23](#).
 - c) *“... and he who hates his life in this world ...”* – describes the person who repents of his sinfulness, changing his mind and dies to self-indulgence – cp. [Romans 6:4-11](#).
 - d) *“... will keep it to life eternal.”* – describes the blessing of eternal life enjoyed by those who are in Christ Jesus.

5. Jesus then makes a clear analogy to Himself – that just as He is going to receive glory by dying to selfishness and giving Himself for sinful men, *“If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor Him.”*
6. These promises, made by Jesus, are precious to all who “follow” Jesus:
 - a) First, *“where I am, there My servant will be also ...”* – cp. John 14:3; John 8:21.
 - b) Also, *“if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor Him”* – faithful service to Jesus brings a reward of glory – cp. 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:6-9.
7. The changes wrought in the lives of sinners who are made eligible thereby for the honoring by the Father are again proof of the indication of the effectiveness of the atonement in a person’s life.

So What?

1. What would cause someone seeking Jesus to feel comfortable approaching me? What in my conduct would encourage—or discourage—they?
2. What evidence in my priorities and choices shows that Christ has given me new life?
3. How can the principle of the seed falling into the ground and dying, then producing life play itself out in my life?